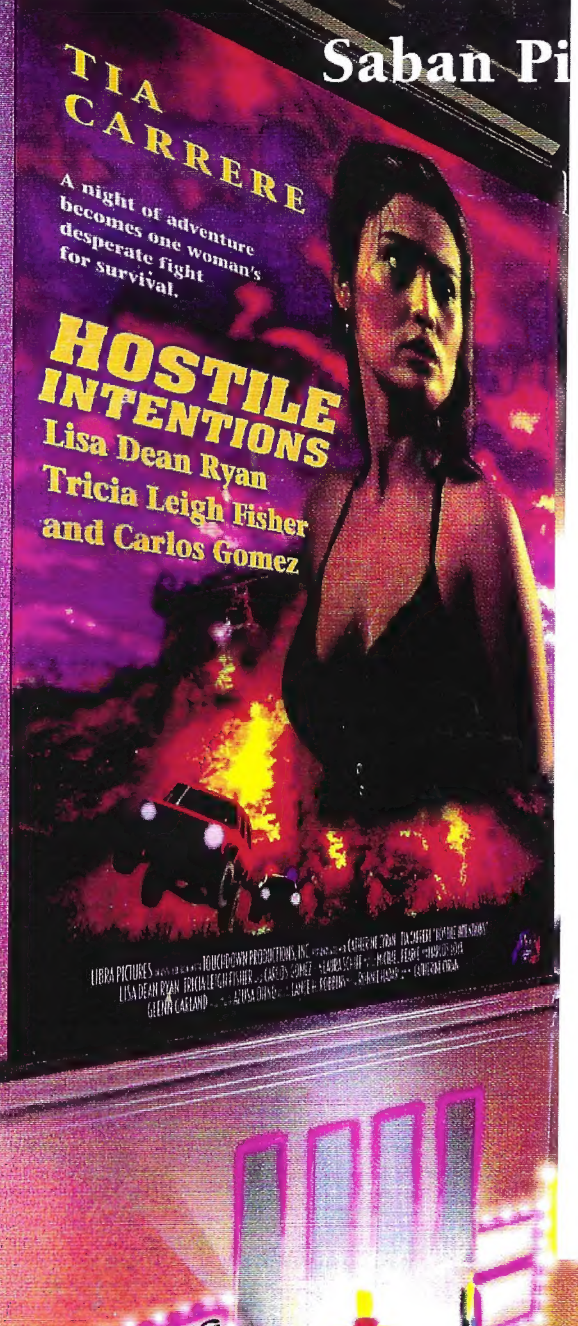
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Saban Pi



'Taxandria' fine toons live-action animation mix

AMSTERDAM A revolutionary new system for melding live-action and animation got its first public unveiling earlier this month at the opening night of Belgium's Ghent Intl. Film Festival, Oct. 4.

"Taxandria," a $10 million fairy-tale adventure, was 10 years in the making and "is like nothing you've ever seen before. The results make 'Roger Rabbit' look archaic by comparison," says Rene Solleveld of Amsterdam-based Praxino Pictures, which shared chores alongside co-producers Iblis Films (Brussels), Les Productions Dussart (Paris) and Bibo Film Prods. (Berlin).

The story of a boy and girl who free a society from rigid conservatism, pic stars Armin Mueller-Stahl, Andrew Sachs, Elliot Spiers, Katja Studt and Richard Kattan. Most of the time, they appear against animated backgrounds in a new system developed with Agfa Gevaert by the director, Belgium's Raoul Servais.

The system, dubbed "Servaisgraphy," uses various layers of transparencies and chroma-key. "It's extremely versatile and will change the whole approach toward mixing live-action and animation in the future," claims Solleveld.

More than 200 backgrounds and foregrounds for the movie were made in Ghent. The actors were filmed at Hungary's Mafilm Studios.

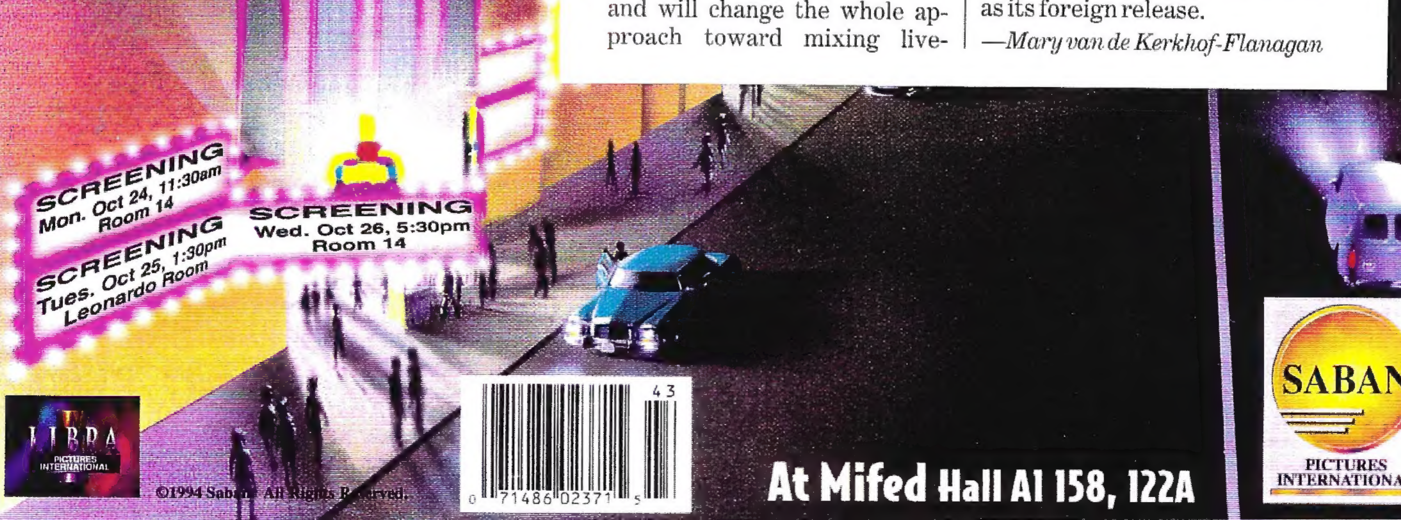
The pic also uses a new digital post-production system developed by Efi Witzen and Doron Fiterman at Bibo TV Studios in Bad Hamburg, Germany.

The system, which allows unprecedented manipulation of image, but which Solleveld admits "has taken some time to get right and led to delays," is also being used on the upcoming "Neverending Story III."

With what Solleveld calls "ambitions squarely aimed at the international market," "Taxandria" was shot in English but will also be released in Dutch, French and German soundtrack versions. Brussels-based Iblis Films is handling international sales.

Euro pay TV channel FilmNet, which kicked in 300 million Belgian francs ($9.4 million) of the budget, is to air the movie later this year, at the same time as its foreign release.

—Mary van de Kerkhof-Flanagan



At Mifed Hall AI 158, 122A
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